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CORRESPONDENCE.

CHAUCER'S *House of Fame* AND BOC-
CACCIO'S *Amorosa Visione*.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS:—In one of his helpful notes upon Chaucer (*Anglia*, xiv, p. 233), Koepfel remarks:—

“Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* ist von den Chaucer-forschern bisher nicht beachtet worden. Der gelehrte autor hat in dieser dichtung seine belesenheit in so reizloser weise zur geltung gebracht, dass man sich nach den leidlichen ersten gesängen bald versucht fühlt, das buch welches deren fünfzig zählt, aus der hand zu legen.”

Undoubtedly, if the poem is read continuously, this judgment seems justified. Yet here and there attractive bits of description and narration relieve the otherwise dreary and labored allegory, and we need not suppose Chaucer had recourse to the poem only with an eye to practical profit.

It was once suggested, of course absurdly, that Chaucer lacked the patience to read books through, and that what he borrowed is generally to be discovered in the first few pages of his originals. At first sight this might seem true in the present case—it might appear that for Chaucer as for Koepfel the poem was lacking in interest—for the parallel passages to the *Parlement of Foules* and the *House of Fame* which are instanced by Koepfel are all in the first six cantos. But Chaucer's indebtedness did not end here. Throughout in many ways (barring the element of humor which Chaucer loved at all times but which Boccaccio abstained from in his verse), the poets, to use an old phrase, “favor” one another,—moreover, there seems to be sufficient evidence of direct indebtedness to show that Chaucer used the remainder of the poem as well as the first six cantos.

Koepfel's parallels (reference is here made only to the *House of Fame*) identify in a very interesting way, the *Lady Fame* of Chaucer with Boccaccio's *Gloria del popol mondano* and show that both poems speak of Virgil, Lucan, Ovid, and Statius, and in much the same fashion. In conclusion Koepfel says:

“Das sind die fälle, welche mir dafür zu

sprechen scheinen dass Chaucer auch die ‘*Amorosa Visione*’ mit aufmerksamkeit gelesen hat. Stofflich berührt sich Boccaccio im weiteren verlauf seiner dichtung noch sehr häufig mit Chaucer, ohne dass wir jedoch, bei dem reichlichen fließen anderer quellen, anlass haben, in seinen versen Chaucer's vorbild zu suchen.”

One of the features of similarity is the citation of stock examples in history and mythology of loving maidens left forlorn. These, with their stories told at various lengths, take up a good part of the *Visione*; in Chaucer they are used to illustrate the fact that Æneas was not alone in his “greet trespas,” and all but two, (Demophon and Phillis, and Theseus and Adriane) are dismissed in a line or so. It is of course natural to refer such a list at once, as Skeat, for example, does (notes on ll. 388-426) to Ovid's *Heroïdes*, but in so doing, it is possible to be a bit hasty. If the reader is sufficiently interested to inquire why Chaucer gave twenty-one lines to the story of Theseus, Phedra and Ariadne, while dismissing the others so briefly; if, in consequence, he tries to divine the reason for Chaucer's special interest by comparing him with Ovid (*Ep. x*), it will be matter of surprise to find that Ovid does not mention Phedra at all either in the *Heroïdes*, or, what is more, in the *Metamorphoses*. The same difficulty holds with regard to the story as told again by Chaucer and so charmingly in the *Legend of Good Women*.

The question of Phedra's connection with the legend seems to be an obscure one, and need not be touched upon here; the chief point is where did Chaucer find his version of the story, as it is also of interest to inquire where he obtained such precise information with regard to Phillis's having hanged herself “right by the hals” when in Ovid this mode of death is only suggested in a picturesque way as one of several she pondered her choice of while lamenting her departed lover. We are tempted at once to conclude that Chaucer kept his Boccaccio open beside his Ovid—but not the *De Claris Mulieribus*, as one might think, for these two heroines, Phillis and Ariadne, are not there treated, certainly at least not in Donato's translation.¹ Since Lounsbury points

¹ *Delle Donne Famose* . . . traduzione di M. Donato degli Albanzani di Casentino, Bologna, 1881.

out (ii, 232) that Chaucer by mistake makes Phillis the daughter of Lycurgus owing to a heading "De Phyllida Lycurgi filia" in the *De Genealogia Deorum* (xi, 25), it is there presumably that we should look for the story. This work is unfortunately not at hand, but in any case it would be of more immediate interest in connection with the *Legend of Good Women*, the following parallel would certainly seem to show that the story as given in the *House of Fame* may be at once referred to the inspiration of the *Amorosa Visione*.

Boccaccio (cap. xxii) tells it as follows:—

Io che andava avanti riguardando
 Vidi quiri Teseo nel Laberinto
 Al Minotauro pauroso andando
 Ma poichè quel con ingegno ebbe vinto,
 Che gli diede Arianna, quindi uscire
 Lui vedev' io di gioïa dipinto;
 Al quale appresso Arianna venire,
 E con lei Fedra salir nel suo legno
 E quindi forte a suo poter fuggire.
 Nel quale avendo già l'animo pregno
 Del piacer di Arianna, *lei lasciare*
Vedea dormendo, e girsene al suo regno.
 Gridando desta la vedeva stare
 E lui chiamava piangendo, e *soletta*
Sopr'un diserto scoglio in mezzo al mare:
 Oimè, dicendo, deh, perchè s'affretta
 Sì di fuggir tua nave? Abbi pietate
 Di me ingannata, lassa, giovinetta.
 Segando se ne già l'onde salate
 Con Fedra quegli, e Fedra si tenea
 Per vera sposa per la sua biltate.

The general correspondence in manner and method to Chaucer's rendering would be sufficiently marked to attract attention, even if there were not so distinct a parallel as that between the passages in italics and the following (*H. F.* 415-420).

"For after this, within a whyle
 He lefte hir slepinge in an yle,
 Deserte alone, right in the se,
 And stal away, and leet hir be;
 And took hir suster Phedra tho
 With him, and gan to shippe go."

Chaucer's treatment of the story of Demophon and Phillis likewise in general method suggests Boccaccio's, even though unlike Boc-

caccio he specifies the method of her death. The likeness is in fact more than a general one. It is Boccaccio (cap. xxv) not Chaucer who summarises Ovid with his:

"ricordandoli ancora
 Quant' ella e le sue cosa tutto pronte
 Al suo servigio furono,"

for it is this, her ministry, upon which Ovid dwells, and Ovid's single reference to Demophon's perjured lips (l. 31 f.)

jura, fides ubi nunc, commissaque dextera
 dextrae
 quique erat in falso plurimus ore deus
 does not so much seem the original of Chaucer's (389, 395 f.)

"How he forswar him ful falsly. . . .
 . . . he had do hir swich untrouthe
 Lo! was not this a wo and routhe?"
 as Boccaccio's

"com' ora
 A lei fallita la promessa fede
 Per troppo amor dolor greve l'accora."

Apart from these correspondences it seems worthy of remark in how similar a way in both poems the story of Aeneas and Dido is introduced and dwelt upon save, that Chaucer treats it at greater length. Even here suggestions of direct indebtedness are not lacking, although Chaucer avers (ll. 311 ff.)

"In swiche wordes gan to pleyne
 Dido of hir grete payne,
 As we mette redely;
 Non other auctour alegge I."

This is an amusing assertion considering Chaucer's general reticence concerning Boccaccio, and the fact that the lines 321 ff.,

"O, that your love, ne your bonde
 That ye have sworn with your right honde,
 Ne my cruel death', quod she,
 May holde you still heer with me!"

is Virgil literally (l. 307 f.)

nec te noster amor, nec te data dextera quon-
 dam
 nec moritura tenet crudeli funere Dido.

It is Boccaccio not Virgil, that we have in Dido's prayer for pity as well as in her plea that she is guiltless of injury towards him. Chaucer says (ll. 315-18, etc.)

"Allas!" quod she, "my swete herte,
Have pitee on my sorwes smerte,
And slee ne not! go noght away! . . .
O, haveth of my death pitee!
Ywis, my dere herte, ye
Knownen ful wel that never yit.
As fer-forth as I hadde wit,
Agilte [I] ow in thoght ne deed.
O, have ye men suich goodliheed
In speche, and never a deel of trouthe? ..."

which corresponds to Boccaccio (cap. xxviii):

"Oimè, Enea, or che t'aveva io fatto
Che fuggendo disii il mio morire?
Non è questo servar tra noi quel patto
Che tui mi promettesti; or m'è palese
L'inganno c'hai coperto con falso atto.
Deh, non fuggir, se l'esser mi cortese
Forse non vogli, vincati pietate
Almen de tuoi."

That Chaucer and Boccaccio differ from Virgil in giving the appeal of Dido this turn will appear if we glance at the only passage of corresponding import in the *Aeneid* (ll. 317 ff.):—

si bene quid de te merui fuit aut tibi quicquam
dulce meum, miserere domus labentes et
istam,
oro, siquis adhuc precibus locus, exue mentem.

Apart from these cases, in which Chaucer has used the same material to the same purpose, others no doubt might be, and in time will be, pointed out where he has simply availed himself of a poetic suggestion. We may close with an example of this, which readily offers itself. When the eagle tells Chaucer to what a vast height they have soared, he makes reference to Icarus (l. 919):

"Ne eek the wrecche Dedalus,
Ne his child, nice Icarus.
That fleighe so highe that the hete
His winges malt, and he fel wete
In-mid the see, and ther he dreynthe,
For whom was maked moch compleynthe."

Put beside this Boccaccio (cap. xxxv):—

Appresso vedi que' che con sottile
Magisterio del padre uscì volando
Del Laberinto, che tenendo vile
Miseramente ciò, ch'ammaestrando
Il padre gli avea detto, per volare
Tropo alto, in giù le sue reti spennando
Ora si cala, e appresso affogare
Più là il vedi ne' salati liti:

The mere fact of common reference to Icarus means of course nothing, but the similarity in character and method, in style and general dimensions, is unmistakable. It is in brief passages like this that Boccaccio now and then succeeds—giving us a graphic picture in miniature and in simple words almost as successfully as Chaucer. But unfortunately he restrains his native humor. The austere seriousness of Petrarch and Dante made it

seem to him unfitting in verse.

Chaucer's mythology was probably Boccaccio's. If this is true and Chaucer owed to Boccaccio the fuller form of stories in the *Legend of Good Women* and elsewhere, the world may be just a shade less unforgiving towards Petrarch for having drawn Boccaccio away from his true calling as a fabulist and maker of exquisite prose in the mother-tongue, to become the Lemprière of his time in a Latin said to be not faultless and certainly without meaning or message for the latter day.

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INDIANA PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Indiana Philological Society was held in Indianapolis, on May 24th and 25th, 1895. As on previous occasions, the first session was devoted to the discussion of pedagogical topics, the second to the reading of more or less technical papers. The Modern Languages were this time represented by two papers only! "Art in the Faerie Queen," by Miss M. E. Lewis of Coates College; and "A Few Passages in Goethe's Faust," by your correspondent. A third paper, on "The Epigram," by J. H. Howard of Indiana University, reached somewhat into our domain, in so far as the speaker dealt largely with Lessing's views on the subject. The numerous contributions pertaining to Classical Philology were mostly the result of careful work. Altogether, however, the usual mistake was made: an overcrowded program was gone through hastily, little or no allowance being made for discussions or for personal intercourse. A genuine and sound interest was taken in the pedagogical part of the meeting. The subjects discussed were: "Literal vs. Idiomatic Translations," introduced by J. S. Johnson of De Pauw University; and "Language Preparation for Admission to Indiana Colleges: What should be demanded and how may this be secured?" On motion of your correspondent, it was resolved that the Indiana Philological Society appoint a committee of five members, one from each of the five departments represented, who shall act as the organ of the Society during the following year. It shall be their duty to investigate the condition of affairs in regard to language instruction in Indiana, to make suggestions for the improvement of the same, to confer with educational authorities and organizations, and to try in every way to bring about some concerted action throughout the state in the direction of improvement.

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